

# Jeff Tang

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## **Testimony of Jeffrey Tang on February 22, 2023 in opposition to H.B. 5653**

Dear Distinguished Members of the Legislature,

I ask you to oppose HB5653 because it would make our communities and people less safe, particularly and disproportionately the more vulnerable populations of people of color and people of lower income of all races. As a brown-skinned man with a blue-collar job, this bill looks like an attempt to punish people like me for daring to learn how to defend ourselves against the criminals which the State treats so leniently. The fact that this bill comes as a large number of women and people of color have recently become gun owners is despicable and racist.

In my capacity as the Treasurer of the Stratford Gun Collectors Association, I handle the entrance table duties at our gun shows. I consider it a point of pride that at our gun shows, I have seen a noticeable uptick in people of color, particularly Black new gun owners. You can tell both by the way they move and look at things, and by the issue date on their pistol permits. Speaking with these new gun owners, who are often women, they're eager to learn how to use their new firearms to defend themselves. I always make sure they know where the ammunition sellers are, because learning how to shoot accurately in a stressful defensive situation requires a lot of practice, which means a lot of ammunition. That means thousands of rounds over the course of several years. Experienced shooters still need to keep up their skills by practicing regularly.

Imposing an additional excise tax of two and five cents per round of ammunition (about 20% at current prices) is a heavy burden, and this rests mostly on those who are making the effort to be responsible. As anyone who reads the news can attest, criminals don't care if they shoot someone they didn't want to. But responsible gun owners who want to protect themselves and their loved ones from those criminals literally lay awake at night worrying about what could happen if their training isn't good enough and they fail to stop an attacking criminal or, worse, even harm someone they don't intend to.

The timing of this new proposed tax comes after an influx of people of color and women to the gun-owning community. It makes it seem like lawmakers are afraid of "those people" exercising their rights. As one of "those people" I find this very offensive. I imagine the poll taxes and literacy tests for voters felt much the same way to those denied their right to vote by racist and classist lawmakers.

With the growing belief among people of color that the police will neither serve nor protect us, the legislature needs to do better than punish people like me for trying to responsibly protect myself and my loved ones while blaming me for criminal shootings and domestic violence. There are better ways to reduce violence than by taxing the basic human right to defend against attack. I trust you will make the right decision and vote against this bill which makes all Connecticut residents less safe.

Thank you for your time and the work you do in our government.

Signed 2-20-23, Jeff Tang, Fairfield, Connecticut

